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TECHNICAL ACTION PANELS

Rural Areas Development and Outreach Functions

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TECHNICAL ACTION PANELS

Rural Areas Development and Outreach Functions

1. What Is a Technical Action Panel (TAP)?

A Technical Action Panel is composed of representatives of agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture and of other Federal and State agencies whose programs benefit rural people and are available in the State, area or county served by the Technical Action Panel.

2. What Are State Technical Action Panels?

State Technical Action Panels are composed of the heads of USDA agencies and of other Federal and State agencies responsible for the operation of their respective programs in each State. The State Director of Farmers Home Administration, the State Conservationist of Soil Conservation Service and the State Executive Director of Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service are on every State Technical Action Panel. Other members include the State Director of the State Cooperative Extension Service, OEO representatives, and heads of other Federal and State agencies whose programs benefit rural people.

3. What Are District or Area Technical Action Panels?

These are Technical Action Panels composed of representatives of various Federal and State agencies that provide technical support for multi-county rural areas development committees or special program areas, such as a resource conservation and development project, rural renewal areas, or other multi-county project areas.

4. What Are County Technical Action Panels?

County Technical Action Panels are panels of USDA agency representatives and representatives of other Federal, State and local agencies responsible for the administration of their respective programs in each county. The County FHA Supervisor, SCS Work Unit Conservationist, and County Office Manager of ASCS are on County Technical Action Panels. The County Agent of the Cooperative Extension Service is also invited to be a member of the panel, as are Community Action Program Directors, Vocational Agricultural teachers, Home Economists, Social Security representatives, Employment Security officials, and other representatives of Federal, State and local agencies who serve rural people in the county.

5. Who Has the Responsibility for Technical Action Panels?

All agencies of the Department of Agriculture that have field offices are responsible for the effective operation of Technical Action Panels.

6. Who Serves as Chairmen of Technical Action Panels?

The State FHA Directors serve as chairmen of State Technical Action Panels in States where a State FHA Director's headquarters are located. In other States a representative of another agency is designated to serve as State Technical Action Panel chairman. County FHA Supervisors serve as chairmen of County Technical Action Panels in those counties where a county FHA office is located. In other counties, the Work Unit Conservationist of SCS serves as chairman in a county where there is an SCS office. In counties where there is neither an FHA office nor an SCS office headquartered, the County Office Manager of ASCS serves as chairman of the County Technical Action Panel.

7. What Types of Duties Do the Panels Perform?

The panels assist rural people and rural communities identify the services they need for economic, social, and cultural growth and locate and secure the needed services. They also assist individuals and groups with economic development plans, community development projects, inventories, and surveys.

8. What Is Outreach?

Executive Order No. 11307 required that the facilities of the USDA field agencies be made available when necessary, to assist other agencies of the Federal Government in extending their programs into rural areas. The carrying out of this directive is called Outreach. This same Executive Order requires that other agencies of the Federal Government when necessary, take steps to make their services more effective in rural areas.

9. How Is Outreach Carried Out?

The Rural Community Development Service of the USDA works with Departments and agencies of the Federal Government outside USDA and develops methods whereby the Technical Action Panels can assist in the extension of non-USDA programs into rural areas. The agreed upon methods are implemented through the State Technical Action Panels and more than 3,000 Area and County Technical Action Panels.

The Farmers Home Administration has been assigned leadership responsibility for implementation of the Outreach function in the field. State, Area and County Technical Action Panels continually search for ways and means of using the facilities and services of all Federal, State and local agency programs to benefit rural areas.

10. What Are Some Examples of Outreach?

Technical Action Panels help small businessmen in rural areas contact the Small Business Administration. The panels help rural youths in search of training contact the Job Corps. The panels help elderly rural people enroll in the Medicare Program. The panels also help local rural development groups bring up to date their overall economic development programs and take other steps needed to qualify for assistance from the Economic Development Administration.

11. Who May Make Inquiries to Technical Action Panels for Assistance?

Any organization, group, or individual in the rural area may request assistance from the Technical Action Panel.

12. What Kind of Development Groups Can Get Outreach Assistance From Technical Action Panels?

Technical Action Panels provide needed assistance to all kinds of organized development groups including public bodies, private non-profit associations and rural area development committees who are interested in the development of the area.

13. Where Are Inquiries for Panel Assistance Made?

Inquiries for assistance are generally made to the chairman of the Technical Action Panel; however, they may be made to any representative of any Technical Action Panel agency. Problems of community or countywide nature are normally referred to the County Technical Action Panel. Those of two or more counties may be referred to the Area or District panel. Those of statewide interest should be referred to the State Technical Action Panel.

14. What Type of Assistance Can Be Requested From Technical Action Panels?

Any kind of assistance available from government agencies. Technical Action Panels never say "no" to inquiries received for assistance in developing rural America. If the assistance requested is not available, Panels suggest alternative measures.

To locate members of Technical Action Panels look in the telephone book under the heading:

U.S. Government
Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service
Farmers Home Administration
Forest Service
Soil Conservation Service
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